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Proposed extension to
the Threat Working Group paper -
drafted but not tabled
by R. Vally

We agree with the data and, in general, with most of the qualitative comments presented in the Threat Working Group draft paper, but we have two main disagreements with the paper as now written.

First, the paper appears to give the overall impression that Soviet and other Pact land forces are, as they now exist, basically very sound units which would suffer from only rather minor weaknesses in combat. Thus Pact land forces would not, if rapidly called on to go to war, experience very great degradation in combat effectiveness.

Yet we observe that Pact land forces, while stated to be even more mechanized than U.S. Army forces, are less well trained, less well equipped, less well provided with combat and service support, less well designed for conventional conflict, and less fully manned in peacetime in terms of required wartime strengths. We consider that the cumulative effect of these deficiencies would be very seriously to reduce the combat effectiveness of Pact forces in any conflict, and particularly in nonnuclear combat, unless elaborate and time-consuming preparations were made to reduce these weaknesses well in advance of any deliberate large attack.

As a result, our second objection concerns the estimated time for preparing large-scale nonnuclear attacks involving, say, more than 25 divisions. We consider that if the Pact planned such an attack, they would require, and would take, appreciably more time to prepare than suggested in the Threat Working Group paper. If this is in fact the case, NATO's warning time would be correspondingly increased.

The main argument we make in support of this proposition is that many of the divisions which would have to be employed in a 30-80 division attack, and most of the non-divisional support units, are maintained in peacetime at strengths which are too far below wartime strengths to provide reasonable combat-readiness. While the under-strength units could be rapidly filled out with reservists, this by itself would not make the units reasonably combat-ready. Some weeks of unit training would be required to ready units manned at 30-60 percent, and months would be required for units at 0-30 percent strength.

It can be argued that the Soviet military are pragmatic and ruthless, and thus that if necessary they would commit units to battle as soon as filled out, regardless of their readiness. We consider, however, that quite aside from humanitarian scruples, straightforward considerations of military effectiveness would make this an unattractive course of action.

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